United Nations A/64/111

General Assembly

Distr.: General
24 June 2009

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session
Item 96 (d) of the preliminary list*
Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Now operating from the region, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific is in a better position to carry out more effectively the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly and to be more responsive to requests for assistance from the countries in the region. The Centre has already begun to promote peace and disarmament in the Asia and Pacific region through the development and implementation of concrete projects responding to the actual needs of countries in the region.

The inauguration of the Regional Centre's new office in Kathmandu on 18 August 2008 marked a turning point in the history of the Centre. Its smooth relocation to the region was successfully achieved in the context of the continuous strengthening of the activities of the Office for Disarmament Affairs at the regional and subregional levels. At its sixty-third session, the General Assembly welcomed the relocation of the Centre from New York to Nepal and its coming into operation on 18 August 2008, and expressed its gratitude to the Government of Nepal for its cooperation and financial support.

* A/64/50.

09-37978 (E) 200709

Please recycle

The present report contains an account of the activities undertaken by the Regional Centre during the period from July 2008 to June 2009. During the reporting period, the Centre continued to promote disarmament and security dialogue and cooperation in the Asia and Pacific region by organizing workshops, seminars and two conferences, namely, the twentieth United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues, held in Saitama, Japan, and the seventh Joint United Nations-Republic of Korea Conference on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues, held in Jeju Island, Republic of Korea. The Centre also launched a new project aimed at enhancing international and regional cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons in the Asia and Pacific region.

In order to enable the Regional Centre to carry out its programme of activities in accordance with its mandate, the General Assembly, by its resolution 63/77, requested the Secretary-General to provide from the regular budget, starting in the biennium 2010-2011, the necessary support to ensure the sustainability of the core activities and operation of the Centre. It is essential that Member States, in particular those from the region, take full ownership of the Centre and also provide political and financial support to its operation and programmatic activities benefiting the Asia-Pacific region.

In this connection, the Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to the Member States for their support to ensure the sustainability of the core activities and operation of the Regional Centre and, in particular, to the Government of Nepal and those States that have already contributed financially and in kind to the Centre.

I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 42/39 D, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific is mandated to provide, on request, substantive support for initiatives and other activities mutually agreed upon by the Member States of the Asia-Pacific region for the implementation of measures for peace and disarmament, through appropriate utilization of available resources. The Centre coordinates the implementation of regional activities of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in Asia and the Pacific.

2. By its resolution 63/77, the General Assembly welcomed the relocation of the Regional Centre from New York to Kathmandu and its coming into operation on 18 August 2008. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide from the biennial regular budget, starting in 2010-2011, the necessary support to ensure the sustainability of the core activities and operations of the Centre; to continue to provide the necessary support to the Centre for greater achievements and results, within existing resources, until the regular budget was approved; and to report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session on the implementation of the resolution.

3. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request and covers the activities of the Regional Centre during the period from July 2008 to June 2009. A financial statement on the status of the Trust Fund for the Regional Centre for the first year of the biennium 2008-2009 is contained in the annex.

II. Completion of relocation of the Regional Centre from New York to Kathmandu

4. On 18 August 2008, the new office of the Regional Centre was officially opened in Kathmandu. The event marked the successful completion of the process of relocating the Centre from New York to Kathmandu. The close cooperation between the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Government of Nepal, as well as the support of the United Nations Development Programme country office in Nepal and the United Nations country team as whole, were critical to that success. At the inauguration, the Secretary-General was represented by his Chef de Cabinet, Vijay Nambiar. In his message on that occasion, the Secretary-General expressed his confidence that the Centre would live up to the high expectations of the international community and that the United Nations and its Member States, by working together, would succeed in making the entire Asia-Pacific region one of peace and disarmament.

5. As the primary United Nations regional entity dealing with disarmament and non-proliferation issues in the Asia and Pacific region, the Regional Centre continued to address the needs of the region and to step up its partnership with Member States and other key stakeholders in the region.

III. Activities of the Centre

6. During the reporting period, the Regional Centre focused its programmatic activities on the following areas: promoting global disarmament and non-proliferation norms; enhancing regional dialogue on disarmament,

non-proliferation and security matters; and outreach and advocacy activities. The Centre continued to organize annual United Nations conferences on disarmament and non-proliferation issues, as well as regional seminars to promote the universality and implementation of multilateral disarmament instruments. It also launched a new project on enhancing international and regional cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons in the Asia and Pacific region.

A. Twentieth United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues

7. The Regional Centre organized, in cooperation with the Government of Japan and the city of Saitama, Japan, the twentieth United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues, entitled "Nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy: trends and challenges", held in Saitama, from 27 to 29 August 2008. The Conference drew more than 90 participants and observers from Governments, international organizations, academic institutions and civil society. Discussions at the conference focused on ways and means to strengthen the three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy), nuclear renaissance and nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and security in East Asia, and cooperation with civil society.

8. At the Conference, participants explored various options on how to reach a consensus and substantive outcome at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which was deemed as crucial to the viability of the Treaty. The pros and cons of civilian nuclear cooperation with States not party to the Treaty were also discussed. It was pointed out that growing interest in developing and expanding nuclear energy to meet energy needs and environmental concerns would inevitably give rise to nuclear security and proliferation risks, and thus measures related to three key elements — safety, security and safeguards — should be put in place to address such risks. In addressing the issues of nuclear and missile proliferation concerns and possible future security mechanisms in East Asia, participants noted the increasingly crucial role of civil society in dealing with security and disarmament issues, as manifested in the recent trend of forming like-minded coalitions between Governments and civil society, for example, in regard to anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions. The Conference was open to the public, which proved to be effective in raising awareness and generating public interest in the discussion of security- and disarmament-related issues.

B. Seventh United Nations-Republic of Korea Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues

9. The Regional Centre and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea jointly organized the seventh United Nations-Republic of Korea Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues, entitled "Nuclear renaissance and the Non-Proliferation Treaty: reinforcing the three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty", on Jeju Island, Republic of Korea, from 24 to 26 November 2008. More than 50 representatives of Governments, international

organizations, academia, research institutions and civil society attended the Conference.

10. The conference addressed, inter alia, ways to revitalize the Non-Proliferation Treaty process, nuclear renaissance and multilateral assurance mechanisms for nuclear fuel supply, challenges and responses to nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation challenges in North-East Asia. The Conference provided a forum for frank and open discussions of critical issues in the field of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and regional security. Participants agreed that political will from all States parties was crucial for overcoming the anticipated hurdles to achieving a substantive outcome at the 2010 Treaty Review Conference. Various proposals on multilateral mechanisms for nuclear fuel supplies were also discussed. Options to respond to nuclear proliferation challenges were explored, including incentives and targeted sanctions. Participants agreed that, despite all the difficulties, the Six-Party Talks had proved to be an essential forum for achieving the goal of the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

C. Promoting the universality of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols in Asia and the Pacific

11. As part of a joint project of the Office for Disarmament Affairs with the European Union on promoting the universality of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols, the Regional Centre organized two regional seminars — one for Central Asia and one for South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific.

12. The two regional seminars were held in Almaty on 24 and 25 September 2008 and in Kathmandu on 17 and 18 December 2008. Representatives of States, the United Nations, the European Union, the International Committee of the Red Cross and relevant regional organizations participated in the seminars.

13. The two seminars raised the awareness of participating States of the purpose and provisions of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Convention process, recent developments and trends, national experiences and lessons learned in ratifying and implementing the Convention. The seminars discussed challenges facing States in their accession process and possible areas of assistance needed. The seminars also identified measures that States could take towards accession to the Convention and its Protocols, including establishing a network of national points of contact for issues related to the Convention, aimed at increasing the membership of the Convention and its Protocols.

D. Enhancing international and regional cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons

14. The Regional Centre organized a regional seminar on illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons in Central Asia and South Asia in Kathmandu on 17 and 18 June 2009. The seminar was the first in a series of three for the Asia and Pacific region on that topic. Representatives from Central and South Asian States, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, the

International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the International Action Network on Small Arms, Saferworld and the Small Arms Survey participated in the seminar. The seminar addressed a number of issues, such as the challenges posed by illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons, national legislation and regulations in that regard and strengthening international and regional cooperation, including cross-border cooperation. The seminar provided an opportunity for the participants to exchange information on national experiences, good practices and lessons learned. The issues of capacity-building and technical assistance in this area and possible follow-up actions were also addressed.

E. Strengthening cooperation with regional and intergovernmental organizations and other relevant actors

15. The Regional Centre increased its cooperation and information-sharing with regional and other intergovernmental organizations as well as with academic institutions and non-governmental organizations in the Asia-Pacific region, including through reciprocal meetings on regional security and disarmament matters. The Centre is building a regional network of entities working on disarmament- and security-related issues and has also begun exploring with relevant organizations and institutions possibilities of undertaking joint initiatives and projects in the region.

16. The Regional Centre participated in the first South Asian Regional Conference on International Humanitarian Law, held in Kathmandu from 24 to 27 February 2009, and made a presentation on weapon treaties and international humanitarian law. The regional conference provided an opportunity for participating Governments and experts to exchange their views on international humanitarian law in South Asia and to broaden their understanding of arms control and disarmament in relation to international humanitarian law.

17. The Regional Centre hosted a workshop for members of the International Action Network on Small Arms in Nepal on 25 February 2009. The workshop assessed the role of civil society in halting the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons in order to reduce deaths, injuries, crime and conflict from violence related to small arms and light weapons. The workshop discussed challenges in those areas and identified strategies aimed at addressing them.

18. The Regional Centre participated in the Asia Pacific Regional Conference on an Arms Trade Treaty, jointly hosted by the Government of Japan and Oxfam in Tokyo on 26 and 27 February 2009. The Centre shared its experience on how Governments and civil society in the Asia-Pacific region could work together to promote a meaningful dialogue aimed at bridging differences among States in the region.

19. The Regional Centre also participated in a regional workshop on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Pacific island States, organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in Port-Vila from 29 April to 1 May 2009. The Centre briefed participants on its role and activities in promoting disarmament and non-proliferation and on its capacity to assist Member States in building their capacities in the disarmament field.

20. The Regional Centre participated in a regional meeting for Pacific island States on the strengthening of the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in Sydney, Australia, on 22 and 23 June 2009 and organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in cooperation with the Government of Australia. The meeting reviewed the implementation of the Programme of Action in the Pacific region and adopted a regional plan of action on its further implementation. The Centre provided information and shared its experience on ways and means to assist States of the region with regard to the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

F. Outreach and information activities

21. The Regional Centre launched its new website (www.unrcpd.org.np) on 11 May 2009. With its user-friendly design and navigation tools, the new website provides specific information related to peace and disarmament in the Asia and Pacific region to better serve the needs of users in the region and beyond.

22. Since its relocation, the Regional Centre has utilized various occasions to disseminate information about its mandate and activities, to assess the interest and needs of States and other stakeholders in the region and to explore possibilities for collaboration in designing and implementing disarmament-related projects and initiatives.

IV. Staffing and financing

23. The opening of the Regional Centre's new office in Kathmandu was supported by a significant improvement in its staffing situation. The new Director assumed his functions in October 2008. Thanks to the generous contributions of the Governments of Nepal, the Netherlands and Switzerland, the staff of the Centre now comprises a special coordinator for peace and disarmament programmes, an associate expert, two local support staff and two security guards.

24. In order to be able to carry out its mandate fully and effectively, the Regional Centre needs to rely on a stable core team of skilled professional and support staff. In addition, for the Centre to develop and carry out disarmament and non-proliferation-related programmes in the region, financial contributions are essential to support the hiring of project staff and the execution of concrete projects.

25. During the reporting period, voluntary contributions in the amount of $104,982 were received. The Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to those Member States that have already contributed financially and in kind to the Regional Centre, including Austria, China, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Nepal, the Netherlands, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Thailand and Turkey. Those annual contributions are essential to ensure the sustainability of the operation of the Centre and its core activities. The Secretary-General urges all Member States, in particular those from the region, to provide financial resources in support of the Centre's programme benefiting the Asia-Pacific region.

26. Past experience shows that relying solely on voluntary contributions for the operation of the Regional Centre is not sustainable. The Secretary-General has taken due note of the request by the General Assembly, by its resolution 63/77, to provide

from the regular budget, starting in the biennium 2010-2011, the necessary support to ensure the sustainability of the core activities and operation of the Centre. To that end, provision is made in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011 to respond to the request by the Assembly.

V. Conclusion

27. During the reporting period, the relocation of the Regional Centre from New York to Kathmandu was successfully completed, and the Centre started operating from its new office in Nepal in August 2008. The transition from New York to Kathmandu was carried out seamlessly without interruption to the activities of the Centre. The Centre continued to implement its programme of activities, including the organization of annual conferences and regional seminars. It also started to implement new projects, such as enhancing international and regional cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. The Secretary-General expresses his deep appreciation to Member States, in particular Nepal, the host country of the Centre, for their valuable support, including financial contributions, provided to the Centre in its relocation to Nepal and commencement of operations from there.

28. The physical operation from the region places the Regional Centre in a better position to carry out effectively the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly and to become more responsive to assistance requests from the countries in the region. In its efforts to fulfil its mandate through undertaking various concrete initiatives and projects, an effective partnership with Member States, international and regional organizations, civil society and other stakeholders is indispensable.

Annex

Status of the Trust Fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for 2008

	United States dollars
Fund balance, 31 December 2007	299 736
Income, 1 January-31 December 2008	
Voluntary contributions	396 838
Interest income	13 320
Other/miscellaneous income	1 081
Subtotal	**411 239**
Expenditures	
1 January-31 December 2008	149 228
Programme support	23 956
Subtotal	**173 184**
Prior period adjustments	1
Fund balance, 31 December 2008	537 792

Note: This information is based on the statement of income and expenditure for 2008. During the period, contributions were received from Austria ($154,760), China ($20,000), Indonesia ($19,982), Kazakhstan ($10,000), Nepal ($54,153), Pakistan ($4,943), the Republic of Korea ($70,000), Thailand ($3,000) and Turkey ($60,000). In addition to those contributions made to the Trust Fund for the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, the Government of Japan contributed $107,095 through the Trust Fund for Global and Regional Disarmament Activities for the organization of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues, held in Saitama, Japan, from 27 to 29 August 2008. During the period from 1 January to 30 June 2009, a contribution was received from Pakistan ($5,000).